

STANDISH, MYLES

Town of Duxbury, Massachusetts



OFFICE OF
TOWN HISTORIAN

MRS. WARREN G. WENTWORTH, JR.
STANDISH SHORE
SOUTH DUXBURY, MASS.

Some notes on The Courtship of Myles Standish :

This is a beautiful legend, told by a gifted story teller, and should be read as a legend that has come down through the years. Like all stories told over and over again, it got changed a bit by each generation until Longfellow told it as he heard it. Those changes do not make a bit of difference unless you are reading it for something more than the story. I always read it for the lovely story and leave history for another day.

The history of Plymouth Colony is the background for the story and you should not try to prove every bit of it. What does it matter if the story has Priscilla ride on a snow white bull when there were no cattle in the Colony? (The first cattle came in 1624, on the Charity, "3 heifers & a bull, the first beginning of any cattle of that kind in ye land");

(Also note that Pilgrims pronounced the "y" in ye, like our word, The, giving Y the sound of "th", as all English did)

And does it matter if Priscilla was spinning when there was no wool in the Colony and probably no spinning wheel? Or that John Alden walked through the woods to her house when everyone lived in the only houses there were, all on the one and only street, Leyden St.? And they did not go through the woods to their new house after the wedding, for the same reason. You can see the Alden house in Plimoth Plantation. Later John and Priscilla had a house south of Plymouth, near Eel River and after 1628, a house in Duxbury, but at first they were along with the other first houses. The main story is true, remember that and enjoy it.

The characters are all true and generally well described. John can hardly be called a "writer", but perhaps Myles Standish thought of him as one. He actually was a cooper, the man who made barrels and kept them from leaking. He later did cabinet work, making furniture and probably helping to build houses with more skill than some had. ~~He had been dead~~ He has been described by descendants as "tall, blond, stern, and unyielding". Perhaps he had to be in a time when he held important town and colony positions.

The Elder is Elder William Brewster who had a house in Plymouth and later came to Duxbury living at the Brewster Wilacs, on Standish Shore.

You may have noted that the wedding ceremony was a civil ceremony, a custom the Pilgrims borrowed from the Dutch. There was no religious ceremony at weddings or at funerals for many years.

Captain Myles Standish married Barbara, who came on the Anne in July or August 1623. She was thought to have been a sister or a cousin of Rose Standish. Both the Standish and Alden families came to Duxbury at the same time, about 1628-30, were always good friends, their children married in several instances and generations, so we can conclude that there was no lasting bad feeling between Standish and Alden, if there ever was any at all.

The Rev. Timothy Alden is the source of much misinformation & his position as clergyman and college president gave him unquestioned credence a generation ago. His tales of family matters, etc. are pleasant & harmless, even if not true - His real damage was done when he ventured into local history - such as the tales of first meeting here, scores of letters

STANDISH

re/ Standish grave site

Through efforts of Congressman E.A. Morse,
the committee got 4 cannon

5700 pounds each and

Twelve 8" shells -

Also "Three splendid boulders and have had
them suitably marked"

note. cannon and stone enclosure are the work
of a town committee -

And - the inscribed boulders are also -

See picture of site before excavation etc -

Only the three "pyramid" stones then

In 1970's a new cemetery supt., over ambitious in
care of cemeteries, cleaned up this site, removed
the old pyramid stones, put in gravel walk etc -

Outraged people began calling me re the
walks, alien to the site. When I investigated
and found the stones gone, I was furious, but
what can one say to a man who meant well?
I took a deep breath, decided on a course, and went
to see the supt. whom I had known from his
boyhood. I hoped by telling him a little history
I could prevent further "disastrous" improvements
he were getting on fire - and I was working up to
the missing stones, when Mr. Kerry Peterson,

a long line cemetery man, signalled me to "go easy" - which I did. He, as soon as was reasonable, told me he had saved those stones, he knew I'd be looking for them some day, he had them under a canvas back of the cemetery office bldg.

Result - I gave supt - a copy of Bradford's Historic Duxbury and Huggins - Graves of Myer Standish etc. for the dept. shelf -

He seemed interested in the historic info - and agreed to put the pyramid stones back - which was done. I am not sure whether my local history talk did the trick, combined with a constrained approach not exactly characteristic of me, or whether the supt. was polite to an ancient dame - At any rate - it all came about because alert citizens (fr ~~Flgston~~ Dux Village) called me and because Henry Peterson had the presence of mind to save the stones. I am grateful for such a man - my friend of many years.

Berkeley Wentworth

5 Feb. 1981 - Just got around to writing this - It has been on my mind for some time. Mr. Peterson should not be forgotten

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nothing of the matter, had in fact, no proof,
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pronouncements & found occasions of proof to
the contrary.

Justin Winis quoted him, prolonging the
inaccuracies.

Re/ cannon etc. on Standish Grave —

I would like to see all that done away with but it could not be done while the men responsible were living — I've outlived most and could try for restoration to the simple old site but I see now that it would not be practical —

The grave is too much a public place — an historic site — with so many visitors that the unsightly and inappropriate enclosure & cannon (wrong date) are probably a good protection —

And vandalism is less likely in a heavy stone enclosure —

And neighborhood boys who play in the grave yard are content to sit on the wall, thereby avoiding damage they might otherwise do —

So, I guess, "let well enough alone"
Dwight D. Wright

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